

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2005

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write concerning persistent media reports that your Administration is considering the sale of F-16 fighter aircraft to the government of Pakistan. ~~We firmly believe that such a sale would undermine our long-term strategic interests in South Asia and urge you not to grant a license for such a sale.~~

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States has lifted sanctions against Pakistan and has provided generous economic and military assistance to that nation in return for Pakistan's support in fighting al Qaeda and the Taliban. Indeed, the Fiscal Year 2005 Foreign Operations bill contains the first \$600 million tranche of a five year, \$3 billion assistance package for Pakistan. We view economic assistance as necessary to reform Pakistan's schools, provide maternal and child health care programs, support economic restructuring, and otherwise engage in the types of programs that will stop Pakistan from being a breeding ground for terrorists. ~~Military assistance, however, is another matter.~~

While early military assistance packages for Pakistan were justified as being in support of Pakistan's fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban, ~~more recent arms sales have moved further and further from the requirements of the war on terror.~~ The recent sale of PC-3 "Orion" surveillance aircraft, TOW anti-tank missiles and Phalanx anti-aircraft guns is a case in point. Since neither al Qaeda nor the remnants of the Taliban have submarines, armored fighting vehicles or airplanes, ~~we are gravely concerned that the systems being provided to Pakistan are intended to be used against Indian capabilities.~~ The sale of F-16s, a platform with an inherent capability to deliver nuclear weapons, would send a similar message in even stronger and more ominous terms.

For the last several years, and with strong Congressional support, your Administration has worked extraordinarily hard to forge a new and different relationship with the Government of India. The National Security Strategy of the United States that you produced in 2002 recognizes that shift in policy by stating that "U.S. interests require a strong relationship with India." It further states that "we start with a view of India as a growing world power with which we have common strategic interests." Indeed, the many steps that you have taken in recent years to give substance to the U.S.-India relationship, from cooperation on counter-terrorism and counter narcotics to joint military

The President
The White House
March 23, 2005
Page two

exercises have all been aimed at creating the trust and closeness that the world's oldest and the world's largest democracies should have.

We believe that those interests, and the broader U.S. national security strategy in South Asia, would be undermined if the United States sells F-16s to Pakistan. Such a sale will send a clear message to the Government of India that we have made our strategic choice in South Asia, and that choice is Pakistan. Although the common strategic interests between India and the United States are apparent, and Indian public opinion regarding the United States is positive, bilateral cooperation and joint efforts to address the strategic issues that face both nations is not automatic. ~~The sale of advanced fighter aircraft to Pakistan will squander an opportunity to continue building the "strong relationship" the United States needs with India. We strongly urge you not to authorize such a sale and thereby prevent the disruption in our relations with India that would surely accompany it.~~

We thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Helena Ros-Lehtinen


Gary L. Ackerman


Diane Watson


Frank Pallone


Eni Faleomavaega


Mark Foley